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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 TEL AVIV 006170

SIPDIS

STATE FOR OES/PCI, NEA/IPA AND NEA/RA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [TBIO](#) [EAGR](#) [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [IS](#) [ENVIRONMENT](#) [SCIENCE](#) [AND](#) [TECHNOLOGY](#)

SUBJECT: ISRAELI NGO PROPOSING TO TRACK INFECTED MIGRATORY BIRDS

REF: A. TEL AVIV 6160

[B](#). TEL AVIV 5279

[1](#)1. (U) SUMMARY: The Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel is making a proposal to the GOI Ministries of Agriculture and Health to set up a surveillance system focused on migratory water fowl which are more likely than over migratory birds to be carriers of the H5N1 strain of avian influenza. If the proposal garners sufficient funding, it may provide useful information for other countries, by indicating the origin and destination of infected birds. MOH is requesting funding to procure enough Tamiflu to treat one million people. Israeli and Jordanian veterinary officials have met to coordinate efforts on avian influenza. End summary.

Bird Experts Put Forth a Surveillance Proposal

[1](#)2. (U) Dr. Gidon Perlman, an Israeli expert on avian influenza, told ESTH Officer October 20 that the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel is making a proposal to MOA and MOH to establish four new monitoring and surveillance sites located at the Hula Valley Reserve, Beit Shemesh and two coastal areas to track and examine migratory birds, particularly water fowl which are more likely to carry avian influenza. Migratory birds overfly Israel from currently affected regions, including the Balkans, Turkey, Russia, and Kazakhstan. All of the proposed tracking sites are areas where migratory birds from Europe and Asia rest as they make their way to Africa. The immediate benefit of establishing these monitoring and surveillance sites is to offer the MOA a means to limit the exposure of domestic fowl from birds carrying the deadly H5N1 strain. Perlman said that with sufficient funding the proposed surveillance system could provide useful information for other countries, by indicating the origin and destination of infected birds. Perlman stressed that culling wild bird populations was a highly ineffective way to deal with avian influenza, but stated that better information on migratory populations could help protect domestic birds. The consensus among health and agricultural officials, as well as the scientific community, is that avian influenza will make its way to Israel and the region in the immediate future due to the half billion migratory birds passing over Israel annually.

MOH Requests 200 million NIS to purchase more Tamiflu

[1](#)3. (U) The Ministry of Health is working with the Ministry of Agriculture to monitor the avian influenza situation in Israel, especially as hundreds of millions of migratory birds are passing through the region from Europe and Asia to spend the winter in Africa. Through press briefings and interviews, the MOH is taking steps to allay public concerns about a potential outbreak of bird flu in the region by promoting public awareness of measures that are being undertaken to prevent the spread of the disease. To date, the MOH has stockpiled a preliminary supply of Tamiflu sufficient to treat 400,000 people. According to an interview given by Professor Manfred Green, Director of the Health Ministry's Israel Center for Disease Control, to the "Jerusalem Post" on October 19, one of the immediate goals of the MOH is to procure enough doses of Tamiflu to treat one million people. The Health Ministry plans to ask the Finance Ministry for an additional 200 million NIS (approximately USD 45 million) to purchase enough doses of Tamiflu to reach this goal. Green also noted that all four Israeli public health funds have an adequate supply of regular flu vaccine and that health fund members are now receiving postcards to remind them of the availability of the regular vaccine. The regular flu vaccine is free to high-risk groups.

Israeli and Jordanian Veterinary Services Meet

[1](#)4. (U) Top officials from the Israeli and Jordanian veterinary services met October 20 at the Allenby Bridge to discuss how to coordinate their efforts in dealing with potential cases of avian influenza. Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom was quoted in a "Haaretz" article October 20 as saying that Israel and Jordan were trying to forge plans to wage a joint effort against the disease, since experts believe that

the disease is likely to spread to the Middle East in the near future. The two countries' veterinary services routinely work with each other in combating various other diseases that affect cattle and birds. The October 20 meeting resulted in both parties agreeing to coordinate monitoring and surveillance of suspect birds. Jordanian veterinarians will have access to an Israeli laboratory in Beit Dagan. There will be another meeting in three weeks to evaluate the situation. The director of the Israeli Veterinary Service stated that the four laboratory testing facilities in Israel are sufficient to meet both countries' testing requirements.

Israel's Poultry Industry

15. (U) In Israel, the poultry industry accounts for 18 percent of the agricultural sector and 40 percent of the livestock industry. The industry yields approximately 340,000 tons of meat and 1.6 billion eggs per year. Although many chicken coops that house chickens for meat production are hermetically sealed, many coops that house chickens for egg production are not. Concerns center on the possibility that birds whose migratory paths pass through Israel may contract the disease in an affected country, and then somehow come in contact with domestic fowl in Israel. If a local outbreak of the disease occurs, the Agricultural Ministry will order the culling of birds in the vicinity of the outbreak to prevent further spread of the disease. What is unclear at the moment, though, is the economic impact on the poultry industry that might result due to reports of an isolated case of the disease.

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JONES